

Protocol on the Use of Degree Award Titles at UCD



University Secretariat

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1. Background

With the proliferation of the use of degree award titles throughout the University, it is advisable to describe the overall framework within which such degree award titles are and may be used, and to establish a protocol which will determine the general principles which should be considered when evaluating both the current use of degree award titles, as well as proposals which are brought before the University Programme Boards (UUPB/UGPB) for the use of specific degree award titles.

A key area to address is the use of BA/BSc, MA/MSc, MPhil/MLitt and PhD degree award titles. The origins of the BSc and MSc degree appear to lie in the general ambitions of universities to advance knowledge with the award of a degree Scientiæ Baccalaureus (BSc) for those who completed a course of study. The Latin term Scientiæ refers to knowledge, and only more recently the narrower subset of knowledge based on what may be referred to as scientific method. The broader use of the term is reflected in practices at graduate level, where the MSc degree is conferred across disciplines of every College (though not in respect of every Masters degree) at UCD. The MPhil and especially the PhD designation are routinely used across most disciplines in the University, and in every college, reflecting also the Greek origins of Philosophiæ, meaning knowledge. The single branch of knowledge has been split into science, social sciences and humanities in modern universities. On one view the BSc, MSc, MPhil and PhD designations are today the default degrees offered at UCD, with a range of exceptions. Key exceptions include the BA, MSc and MLitt designations across a range of humanities subjects, and more specialized designations in single fields, typically associated with particular professions, which include medicine, law, engineering and architecture.

This protocol is therefore designed to address the current discussion, to resolve any ambiguities that may exist, and to provide guidelines for consideration of all degree award titles as they currently exist and as they may exist and be utilised in future.

2. UCD Current Practice

There are currently 56 unique award titles used within the University (see Appendix 1). A significant number of awards are offered by more than one college. Among these, there are several awards that do not include a subject or disciplinary area in the title of the award – these are Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Higher Diploma, Professional Certificate, Professional Diploma, University Certificate and University Diploma.

There are currently 8 award titles that include a subject or disciplinary area in the title of the award, and which are offered by more than one college. The list of these awards, and the colleges offering them, is as follows:

Award Title	Number of Colleges offering	Colleges offering
Bachelor of Science (BSc)	5 colleges	AgFoodVet, B&L, E&A, HealthSci, Sci
Master of Science (MSc)	7 colleges	AgFoodVet, B&L, E&A, HealthSci, HumSci, Sci, IoB
Master of Arts (MA)	3 colleges	A&CS, HumSci, Sci (MA Statistics)
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	2 colleges	B&L, IoB
Master of Engineering Science (MEngSc)	2 colleges	AgFoodVet (Research Masters, Transferable Skills), E&A
Master of Literature (MLitt)	2 colleges	A&CS, HumSci (both Research Masters)
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	2 colleges	A&CS, B&L (both Research Masters)
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	7 colleges	AgFoodVet, A&CS, B&L, E&A, HealthSci, HumSci, Sci

Based on the above information, it would therefore appear that a significant level of flexibility exists which facilitates the use of the same award title within different disciplinary areas (including across different colleges). However, the precise limits of this flexibility are unclear, as evidenced by recent discussions which have highlighted the lack of clear guidelines as to when a particular degree award title may or may not be used, and where a request for the use of a particular award title has not been granted. With a view to drafting the requisite guidelines, the following competing arguments have been considered in relation to the matter.

2.1 Key considerations on Use of Award Titles

- Use of the same degree award title across different disciplinary areas is not in itself unusual, and this practice can often be encouraged as a way of promoting interdisciplinary study and research;
- Liberal use of degree award titles across different disciplines, in particular use of the ‘science’ designation, and particularly at Masters level, is already happening throughout the University;
- Expansion of the use of degree award titles can be used to underpin the broadening of the student experience, and students with a background in science might more easily be attracted to study in arts, and vice versa, in an environment where there is greater flexibility in the use of degree award titles;
- Other universities have recognised that in promoting their courses to prospective students, they need to convey the range of specialisations on offer which can meet the needs of students with broad interests and non-traditional career paths;
- For the purposes of recruiting graduate students to UCD, the MSc degree award title has far greater currency than the MA degree award title, so that there would be a considerable advantage for some programmes to be able to switch to use of the MSc;
- There are some limited instances (at UCD and elsewhere) where the award to be offered (‘arts’ or ‘science’) can be dependent on whether or not the modules that a student has completed include scientific methods. This approach provides for use of award titles across different disciplines, but only where certain specified criteria have been met for use of a particular title;
- In the social sciences, and in comparison with other comparable institutions, many or all graduate degrees are denominated as MSc degrees, with the MA degree referring to an undergraduate degree, though the MA is beginning to be used for postgraduate degrees in artistic disciplines;

- As the University has now moved toward encouraging the development of ‘module descriptors’ and ‘programme descriptors’, the current discussion illustrates the need to also develop ‘award descriptors’ for each of its awards, so that it can be clear with all University stakeholders – staff, current and prospective students, external agencies – what its degree awards are in terms of their academic content, learning outcomes, etc;
- Without guidance on the appropriate use of degree award titles (for which purpose this protocol is to be utilised) there is a likelihood that the issue is raised and debated each time a relevant proposal is presented to the University Programme Boards (UUPB/UGPB);
- Whilst the range of degree award titles currently used at UCD is not considered excessive, further proliferation may be undesirable.

3. Protocol for Use of Degree Award Titles

This protocol establishes the normal conditions in which specific degree award titles may be used within the University. It is intended to be used as a guide for Programme Boards, Graduate School Boards and the University Programme Boards (UUPB/UGPB) which are responsible for oversight over the degree awards of the University.

- 3.1** All new programmes, including the final degree award title to be used for graduates of any such programme, are subject to review and recommendation by the relevant Programme Board or Graduate School Board, and the approval of the relevant University Programme Board (UUPB/UGPB);
- 3.2** For new degree programmes within the University, and throughout all its constituent colleges, the degree award titles for the major awards should normally be BA/BSc, MA/MSc, MPhil/MLitt, PhD, depending on award level and the nature of the award. MPhil, MLitt and PhD are reserved for use for graduate research degree awards only. For some programmes, the designation of BA or BSc, or MA or MSc, may be determined by the relevant Programme Board or Graduate School Board with reference to the details of the curricular content;
- 3.3** Where any deviation from 3.2 is proposed, a strategic case based both on the integrity of the discipline and the potential to more effectively signal to stakeholders (potential students, potential employers and so on) the content of the degree offering must be made and included with the new programme proposal;
- 3.4** For existing degree programmes within the University, in instances where there is a desire to change from an existing and already approved degree award title to a different degree award title, in accordance with the provisions articulated in 3.2, a programme change proposal must be reviewed and recommended by the relevant Programme Board and/or Graduate School Board, and submitted for approval to the relevant University Programme Board (UUPB/UGPB). Such proposals must provide a detailed strategic case which includes an analysis of the applicability of the proposed degree award title to the relevant subject area or discipline, a summary of the content of the programme and the suitability of its relation to the proposed new degree award title, comparisons with other comparable institutions and an evaluation of the market demand for the new degree award title as distinct from, and greater than, the demand for the current degree award title.

4. Version history

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Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	29 Nov 12	First draft	Marguerite O'Loughlin Michael Kennedy
2.0	14 Jan 13	Revision incorporating comments of Working Group at meeting of 10 Dec 2012	Michael Kennedy
3.0	11 Feb 13	Revision by the Chair of the Working Group	Colin Scott
4.0	18 Feb 13	Revision based on recommendations from the Chair of the Working Group	Michael Kennedy
5.0	25 Feb 13	Revision incorporating comments of Working Group at meeting of 22 Feb 2013 and further minor changes by the Chair	Michael Kennedy
6.0	10 Apr 13	Minor amendments following discussion at UUPB/UGPB	Michael Kennedy

Consultation and Approvals Plan

Committee/Group	Date		Version	Action	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Working Group on Award Titles	10 Dec 12	30 Nov 12	1.0	Discussion	Suggestions made
Working Group on Award Titles	22 Feb 13	18 Feb 13	4.0	Discussion	Suggestions made
Working Group on Award Titles	N/A	26 Feb 13	5.0	Circulation for final comment	Recommended to UUPB/UGPB
UUPB/UGPB	10 Apr 13	3 Apr 13	5.0	Discussion	Recommended to AC
AC	2 May 13	25 Apr 13	6.0		

Appendix 1 – Unique Award Titles at UCD

NFQ Level	Award Desc		NFQ Level	Award Desc
8	Bachelor of Actuarial & Financial Studies (BAFS)		9	Master of Public Health (MPH)
8	Bachelor of Agricultural Science (BAgrSc)		9	Master of Public Policy (MPP)
8	Bachelor of Architecture (BArch)		9	Master of Regional & Urban Planning (MRUP)
8	Bachelor of Arts (BA)		9	Master of Science (Agriculture) (MSc(Agr))
8	Bachelor of Business & Law (BBL)		9	Master of Science (MSc)
8	Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS)		9	Master of Social Science (MSocSc)
8	Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL)		9	Master of Surgery (MCh)
8	Bachelor of Commerce (BComm)		9	Master of Urban&Building Conservation (MUBC)
8	Bachelor of Engineering (BE)		9	Master of Veterinary Medicine (MVM)
8	Bachelor of Financial Services (BFS)		10	Doctor of Governance (DGov)
8	Bachelor of Medicine (MB BCh BAO)		10	Doctor of Medicine (MD)
8	Bachelor of Music (BMus)		10	Doctor of Midwifery (DM)
8	Bachelor of Science (BSc)		10	Doctor of Nursing (DN)
8	Bachelor of Social Science (BSocSc)		10	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
8	Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (MVB)		10	Doctor of Psychological Science (DPsychSc)
9	Master of Accounting (MAcc)		10	Doctor of Veterinary Medical Specialisation (DVMS)
9	Master of Agricultural Science (MAgrSc)			
9	Master of Applied Science (MApplSc)			
9	Master of Architectural Science (MArchSc)			
9	Master of Architecture (MArch)			
9	Master of Arts			
9	Master of Business Administration (MBA)			
9	Master of Economic Science (MEconSc)			
9	Master of Education (MEd)			
9	Master of Engineering (ME)			
9	Master of Engineering Science (MEngSc)			
9	Master of Fine Arts (MFA)			
9	Master of Industrial Engineering (MIE)			

9	Master of Landscape Architecture (MLArch)		
9	Master of Law (LLM)		
9	Master of Library&Information Studies (MLIS)		
9	Master of Literature (MLitt)		
9	Master of Management (MMgt)		
9	Master of Musicology (MMus)		
9	Master of Obstetrics (MAO)		
9	Master of Philosophy (MPhil)		
9	Master of Psychological Science (MPsychSc)		